COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

Vol. XI. No. 13.] LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 1807. [Price 10d.

"That nothing of this sort" [the Pitt deceptions] "will now be attempted "I am confident, and, if it were, it certainly would not succeed. The na- "tion is not again to be duped in that way. It would look with ab- "horrence upon the attempt; or, which is still worse, it would entirely "give way to that feeling of indifference, which has long been creeping "over it, and which, of all possible feelings, is the best calculated to "insure and accelerate our destruction as an independent people. Let "us, however, hope for better things; let us hope, that there is now "forming, and that we shall soon enjoy the benefit of, an administra- "tion, including all the distinguished men in the country, all the "weight, whether of rank or of talent, that the nation possesses. Let "us hope, that, after this long, long night of ignorance, of jostling "selfishness, of serpentine intrigue, of crawling sycophancy, and of "miring corruption, the dawn of knowledge, of talent, of public "spirit, and of integrity is approaching. If so, and, surely, we have "good reason to hope that this is the case, we may safely rely upon the "spirit of the people. That spirit is not dead: it is only dormant; it "only wants to be rouzed; but, as was before observed, this is not to "be done by rabble-rouzing words. The threats of invasion, and "other, *all* other terrors, will now be of no avail. The people have "" supped of terrors," foreign as well as domestic. They want nothing "to terrify them. They want something to confide in; something to "cheer them; something that shall present itself to them as a fair foun- "dation for hoping that they will, at some time or other, be restored to "their former state of happiness at home, and of renown in the world; "something that shall make them love their country as Englishmen were "wont to love it; something that shall make them think it an honour "to arm and to defend it. They want to *feel* the beneficent effects of "the acts of the government; they stand in need of the impression to "be produced only by great and striking measures; and to adopt such "measures, with a fair prospect of success, will demand an exertion of "*legitimate influence* to be hoped for only from the union of all those "public men, who have distinguished themselves as the *enemies of cor- "ruption* and of *corrupt rulers*. Upon this last score it is, that the "people (without whose *hearts*, let men say and think what they will, "the *nation* cannot be saved) feel most sensibly; and, it must have been "evident to every tolerably accurate observer, that, by his tortuous "measures to protect peculators, Mr. Pitt lost more of the public "confidence than by all his other measures and tricks put together. If, "therefore, the new ministers shall *set their faces against all measures of "this sort;* and, if, as I trust will be the case, they should resolve to "institute an inquiry into the corruptions of the last twenty years; if

" they should do this, they need fear neither the " blood-suckers" voices, " nor the arms of the French. But, if they do not something, at least " in this way, all their other measures will be useless. They will inspire " no confidence; and, truth to say, *they ought not to inspire any con-* " *fidence*. To a *change*, a *great change*, in this respect, I have always " looked forward as the natural consequence of the overthrow of the " Pitt system of rule; and, if no such change take place, not only " shall I be cruelly disappointed and mortified, but, though, I trust, I " never shall despair of my country, I shall be compelled to transfer my " hopes from the present to a future day; for, as to going on in the " corrupt path of the last twenty years, I shall hate myself if I did not " recoil with horror at the prospect."——POLITICAL REGISTER, *Feb. 1*, 1806. Vol. IX. page 143.

TO THE

FREE AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS

OF THE

CITY AND LIBERTIES OF WESTMINSTER.

LETTER X.

GENTLEMEN,

It was my intention to have analysed, in this letter, the whole of the evidence, given, in the House of Commons, relative to the last petition of Mr. Paull against Mr. Sheridan, and then to have inquired into the justice of the decision, which was, at last, made, on Wednesday the 18th instant, by that famous House (with the sole dissenting voice of Lord Folkestone), namely, that " the petition was *false* and *scandalous*," and that Mr. Drake, the unfortunate acquaintance, son-in-law, and election supporter of Mr. Sheridan, should be committed to Newgate; but, though it would be an entertaining and not unuseful task to trace Mr. Sheridan through his connections with the persons, whom he has now blackened, and with those respectable personages, Mr. Homan, the Matron Butler, and the not less respectable Mr. Aaron Graham, who is, at once, superintendant of *convicts* and of the *theatre of Drury Lane*; yet, I shall decline this task, at least, for the present, and for the two following reasons: first, because I am satisfied, that, as to the evidence and decision, there can be but one opinion in the minds of all uncorrupted men; and, second, because, in speaking of the decision, I should not, in the present state of things, dare to express myself in the manner that I could wish; I should not dare to express my feelings, and I am unwilling to disgrace them by having recourse to rhetorical inventions, especially as a time is, probably, at hand, when with respect to every thing done by the present parliament, we shall be at liberty to say what we please.——With respect to the petition against the return of Mr. Sheridan, I have no scruple to say, that I am *decidedly against its further prosecution*. To the reasons, which I urged against it, at the beginning; or, rather, before it was begun, I might now add the argument of *experience*. Of all the means that the powerful and corrupt have of keeping down the people, that of ruining those who stand forward in support of their rights is the most effectual. Those, who are resolved not to take the wages of corruption, should take care not to expose themselves to the necessity of doing it. The corruptors say to those who would defend the people's rights: " we will make " you betray the people and join us in plun- " dering them, or we will compel you to " cease from your exertions, or we will ruin " you; one way or the other we will pre- " vent the people from deriving any benefit " from what you are able to do." Such is their threat, Gentlemen, and, unhappily, they have, at present, the power to execute it with but too much punctuality. When they have succeeded, upon any such occasion, they never fail to boast, that it is the effect of *the people's* voice; but, they and the devil well know, that, through the influence of that very corruption, which it is their chief object to support, the *free* voice of the people is as completely stifled, as it could possibly be by the feather beds of the murderer's den.

But, Gentlemen, though I decline addressing you any further, at present, upon the foregoing subject, there is another, upon which I cannot refrain from addressing you, as being of the greatest importance to us all, because likely to lead to the destruction of the system of corruption, by which we are so grievously oppressed; I mean, *the change in the ministry*.

This change, which cannot *possibly* be for the worse as to *men*, or as to present *measures*, and which may possibly produce future good, has arisen out of a bill which was before the House of Commons, relative to the removal of certain restraints, under which Roman Catholics and other Dissenters laboured. I propose, first, to submit to you some remarks upon the effect which the bill would have naturally produced; second, upon the motive whence the ministers brought it forward, as clearly demonstrated by the readiness with which they gave it up; third, upon the conduct which is, by the newspaper writers, ascribed to the king upon the occasion; fourth, upon the causes of the boldness of their opponents; fifth, upon the way, in which we, the people, are considered and treated in this and similar cases; and, sixth, upon the great and general cause of these struggles, so manifestly hostile to the interests, the tranquillity, and the honour of our country.

I. The Roman Catholics and other Dissenters, who refuse to comply with certain religious tests, are, by the law, as it now stands, disqualified from holding superior ranks in the Army or the Navy; and, the natural effect of the bill in question would have been to open the road of promotion to persons of that description. This road is, in fact, already open to every class of Dissenters except the Roman Catholics, because the former, either comply with the ceremony required, or are freed from the penalties of non-compliance by an act of parliament, annually passed, called the "Annual Indemnity bill," which is no other than a law for the purpose of excusing from punishment men who have been guilty, knowingly, of a breach of the law. But, there is one test, which the Roman Catholics refuse to give, namely, that, according to which they are called upon to acknowledge the *supremacy* of the king, as relating to the *church*. This they make a point of conscience. They hold, that the Pope is the true and legitimate successor of St. Peter, whom, they say, Jesus Christ placed at the head of the Church, or, in other words, gave him the supremacy over it. They see plainly enough, that the Popes, like our prime ministers, are set up and pulled down by whatever power happens to be strongest; and that, at some times, there are two Popes at once. They see, that any old man, sometimes a grasping miser, sometimes a concubine keeper, sometimes an incestuous beast, sometimes a tyrant, sometimes a consummate hypocrite, and sometimes much more than half a madman, may be Pope; yet are they kind enough still to regard him as a being perfectly sacred. We, of the Church of England, who scorn such self-degrading bigotry, who are enlightened by philosophy, and have liberty to say what we think, hold, on the contrary, that *our king is the head of our church*, as we hold him to be also of the army and the navy and the courts of law and justice; and, all that we ask the Roman Catholics to do, is, *to swear that they hold the same*, which they, to a man, refuse to do; alledging, as was before observed, that, as Jesus Christ's Church is one, as theirs is that one, and as the Pope is the only legitimate head of that, our king cannot possibly be the head of the Church. They are willing to swear, as often as we please, that they regard the king as the only temporal sovereign in his dominions; that with such matters their Pope has nothing at all to do; and that they own no earthly allegiance to any other sovereign than our king; but, we insist upon their swearing, that they own no religious allegiance to any body but the sacred person at the head of our Church; and, here it is that we split.——Now, Gentlemen, the bill in question would (as far as related to military and naval officers, and no farther) have done away the necessity of Roman Catholics giving this test; and, the natural effects would, as was above stated, have been to have placed our Roman Catholic fellow subjects, in the army and navy, upon the same footing with ourselves, leaving them in the quiet enjoyment of their notion, that an old man, living at Rome, whence he was sent for, the other day, by Buonaparté, to travel over the Alps, in the dead of winter, at the evident risk of his neck, is the true and only successor of St. Peter, the supreme head of the Church all over the world, and that it is agreeable to the will of a God of infinite wisdom, that this old man, or much about such an one, should be universally regarded as possessing sacredness and infallibility. Such a notion is, to say the least of it, consummately ridiculous; but, after having given due consideration to the subject, I cannot, I must confess, perceive any practical mischief that could possibly have arisen out of it. Had the measure, indeed, tended to re-introduce the Roman Catholic religion here, with all its attendant temporal abuses, such as they are, or have been, in some foreign countries; with all its abbots and bishops, who, instead of residing in their abbeys and dioceses and superintending their priests, spent their time, in the metropolis, at balls, routs, dinners, cards and dice, and who, instead of bestowing benefices upon men of exemplary piety, crammed their ab-

beys and cathedrals with their stupid and profligate relations, and, not unfrequently with their own bastards: yes, indeed, if this measure had tended to re-introduce an establishment, the clergy of which were promoted, not according to their merits, but through the influence of family connection, of government interest, of party or court cabal, or amorous intrigue; where benefices were frequently the price of political apostacy, of successful sycophancy, of prosperous pimping, or of the prostitution of a sister, a wife, or a daughter; and where so scandalously partial was the distribution of benefices (four or five of which were some times bestowed upon one clergyman), that it seemed as if the design was to belie the Gospel, and, instead of giving the hire to the labourers, to bestow it on the lazy and pampered pluralists, while the curates, the real pastors, were starving in rags, and while the flocks were regularly fleeced, but never fed: Let any man reflect upon these things; let him compare what I have here described with our present happy situation; and then let him say, whether we ought not to have exposed our lives, to the last man, rather than submit to a system of imposture so degrading to us, had the ministers attempted to introduce it. But, Gentlemen, as I said before, I am fully persuaded, that the bill would have had no such tendency; that it would not have altered our church affairs at all for the worse; and that, therefore, the cry, which the detestable hypocrites are setting up, about *danger to the church*, from the dreaded prevalence of *popery* is surely one of those tricks, by the means of which knaves impose upon fools, and amongst which fools, I am confident, none of you will be found.

II. But, Gentlemen, while I am fully persuaded, that the bill in question would have produced *no harm*, either as to church or state, and while, I think, you will discover no reason why any class of our own countrymen should be excluded from posts of military trust, at a time when we see an army of *Hanoverians*, commanded by Hanoverian officers, sationed in the heart of the kingdom, I have, I confess, no very high opinion as to the *good* that would have been done by the bill; and, as to the *motives of the ministers* in bringing it forward, they appear to me to be much worse than doubtful.—— There has been much shuffling and quibbling upon the subject; but, in few words, the state of the case is this. The ministers stood unequivocally pledged to bring forward some measure for the further relief of the Roman Catholics of Ireland. You will tell me, I know, that they stood as firmly pledged to bring forward many other measures, all which pledges they have set at defiance, laughing in the faces of those who were credulous enough to believe in their former professions. But, you will please to observe, that, upon this question, the *Grenvilles* also stood pledged, and not the less firmly because the Marchioness of Buckingham was a Roman Catholic. Yet, having seen, that Pitt found some difficulty in getting off from this rock, they would have avoided it, had they not seen, that the Roman Catholics were coming forth *with a petition to parliament, in order to put their fidelity to the test.* Thus penned up, they fell upon a scheme, by which they thought to be able, at once, to silence the Catholics and to keep their places; and this was, to get the bill in question passed, which they would have held out to the Catholics as a mere *beginning* of the fulfilment of their promises, and as a proof, that if more was not now done, the fault lay elsewhere. Their newspapers assert, with what truth I know not, that to this bill they obtained the previous approbation of the king. We will speak, by-and-by, upon this mode of originating bills; but, that they really did obtain this approbation is, I think, pretty certain from that love of place which has marked their subsequent conduct, and which would have prevented them from agitating the question, if they had therein seen any danger to the duration of their power and emoluments. But, it is, with equal confidence, asserted, on the other side, that the king was not *fully* apprized of the purport of the bill; and that he began to express his disapprobation of it, the moment the mutiny bill had passed. The real truth, however, is, I believe, that the king thought this a good opportunity of humbling them; and was resolved to avail himself of it accordingly. When, therefore, he expressed his disapprobation of the bill, and when they instantly consented to *withdraw it* (though it was in the hands of the parliament, you will observe), that, as they now say, did not satisfy him, and he demanded from them a *written promise*, that they would, for ever after, refrain from interfering with him upon certain points, this, of course, amongst the rest. This written promise, which the Morning Chronicle denominates an "*indenture of servitude*," they refused to sign; and that refusal is the cause of their being stripped of their offices. Now, Gentlemen, if, after all that we have seen of these ministers, since they have been in power, we wanted any proof of their want of principle, of their total disregard of every thing when put in competition with place and

emolument, what other proof do we want than this their offer to withdraw this bill? In my last Register, not aware of this fact, I observed, that if they did not press this bill upon the House with all their might, they must be covered with everlasting disgrace; and, we now find, that not only do they not press the bill upon the House, but that they would have kept their places even on the condition of withdrawing the bill. Yet has this, even this part of their conduct met with an advocate in the Morning Chronicle. Its defence of it is, I think, rather more curious than any thing I have seen for some time; I, therefore, beg you to read it with attention, bearing in mind, all the while, that when Pitt returned to office, without bringing forward a bill of the same sort of much greater extent, this Morning Chronicle accused him of the basest abandonment of principle. I must once more press upon you the necessity of reading the whole of the passage with attention; for, be assured, it contains the substance of their defence; and it contains, too, some very pretty doctrines about our "invaluable constitution," as they are continually calling it, in the House of Commons.——"The Prerogative by which the "King may remove his Ministers is, like "every other, a Prerogative vested in the "Crown for the good of the Nation, and "to be exercised with no other view and to "no other end. The House of Commons "has just as unquestionable a constitutional "right to refuse Supplies as the King to "change his Ministers—but in *neither case* "is the right *arbitrary*. It is to be exer-"cised with a sound discretion, and, in fact, "in both cases is a *latent remedy*, inherent "in our Constitution, to be called into use "upon great emergencies, rather than the "ordinary *healthful system* of our Govern-"ment.—Ministers felt that they had a most "important duty to perform. They had "recourse, therefore, to no abstract theo-"ries. They knew that measures were to be "conducted from their commencement to "their conclusion, according to the PRAC-"TICE OF THE CONSTITUTION, and "every measure they have proposed has "been framed and brought forward, as "much with a just acknowledgment of the "authority under which they acted as "Ministers, as with an ultimate view to "the best interests of their country.—— "When a particular measure came to be "discussed, either as to pressing or aban-"doning it, it was their duty to consider "the whole ends and views of their gene-"ral administration, and its tendency to "advance the public interest, as well as the "value, at the time, of a single measure, "however important. *They were under no* "*DIRECT pledges*; and they knew that if "they could not, as Ministers, effect the "object, their abandoning the Government "would, in every way, render worse the si-"tuation of those whom they wished to be-"nefit. In the situation in which the "country stood, it was not one question on "which its fate was staked, and *they did* "*not feel themselves justified in forsaking* "*the general management of affairs at so* "*important a crisis, because one measure* "*had encountered obstacles.*—They knew, "moreover, that if a conscientious scruple "might have influenced in one quarter, "that scruple was sure to create a whole "swarm of tartuffs and hypocrites from in-"terest; and that the very supposition of "extorting a disagreeable concession from "the King, was sure to set all the activity "of pettifogging devotees in motion, to "make religion and conscience the watch-"words of faction. Ministers, therefore, "resolved to deprive their enemies of this "factions pretence of conscience and prin-"ciple; they resolved to strip the petti-"fogging casuists of all apology for exciting "old prejudices, and kindling forgotten "rancours. They gave up the question, "the success of which, in the circum-"stances of the case, would not have been "advanced by their adherence to it. They "did not wish to afford an excuse to "a set of unprincipled intriguers for ex-"citing a ferment in the state, under the "cloak of any assumed authority above "them—This *firmness*, and this just con-"sideration of the *whole interest of the* "*State*, has *withheld Ministers from giving* "*up their places* to the intriguers who wish "to supplant them."——To take this de-fence in due order, we are first called upon to express our admiration at the discovery, that the prerogative of the crown to dismiss ministers and the privilege of parliament to refuse supplies are "*latent* remedies" in our constitution, to be brought forth and applied in great emergencies, and not to be used in the *healthful* state of the pati-ent. With respect to the latter, it is very latent; very latent indeed; and it is hard to conceive any state of the patient that will be able to call it forth. But, the former is not so latent. It is used pretty often, and with wonderful effect. The truth is, Gen-tlemen, that this difference arises from the state of the doctors and not of the patients. The prerogative of turning out ministers is in active hands, while the privilege of re-fusing supplies is a remedy that is depooited

with those who seem to have been, by some means or other, prevailed upon to leave off business. Yes, Gentlemen, it is this power of *refusing supplies* that constitutes the *sole* check which the parliament has upon the crown, and, if this power ceases, no matter from what cause, there is no check at all upon the crown.——The ministers, we are told, by this writer, "did not amuse themselves with abstract theories," but acted upon "the *practice* of the constitution." That is to say, they threw aside what ought to be done, and did what others had done before them; and, accordingly, they first obtained the consent of the king to the passing of a law, before that law was propounded to the House of Commons. This is a fine doctrine to urge in favour of men who have, for twenty years past, been bawling about the constitution, and railing against the increase of the power of the crown! No; they "did not amuse "*themselves* with abstract theories" about checks and balances: that was a treat they kindly kept for us: mountebanks never play their tricks for the amusement of one another: they would as soon think of curing their ailments with their own brick-dust and yellow-oker drugs.——But, now for the two grand reasons for withdrawing the bill; the first of which is, that the ministers, being under "no *direct* pledges," thought it for the good of the country, in such an important crisis, that they should give up the bill and keep their places. As to the pledges, they mean, I suppose, by introducing the word *direct*, to say, that no man holds a bond, under their hand and seal, for their bringing forward the measure relative to the Catholics; for, in every other way, short of this, had they pledged themselves to that measure. Several of them had resigned with Pitt, in the midst of war and difficulty, because the king would not consent to it; all of them, except Lords Sidmouth and Ellenborough, had urged the adoption of it after Pitt's return to power; and had reproached him, and justly reproached him, with the basest apostacy and love of place, because he accepted of that place upon conditions which disabled him from carrying the measure. No; there was no bond to hold up to their teeth, there was no "*direct* pledge," nor was there any in the case of the Spartan General towards Colonel Johnstone; but, Gentlemen, those who were not to be held to a pledge, such as these ministers had given to the Catholics, and such as the Spartan General had given to Colonel Johnstone, would, I think you will agree, have made, with the help of a pettifogging attorney, a tolerably decent struggle against the trammels of a parchment bond. "No *direct* "pledge!" Verily, when the king had heard this from them; when he had seen the readiness with which they acted upon it, it was high time to have their pledges down in black and white.——With respect to the plea, that they gave up the bill, in order that they might be able to keep their places *for the good of the country*, it is, I will say that for it, the most modest I ever heard in all my life; but, at the same time, it is a plea that every set of placemen have made use of from the days of the famous CABAL down to those of Lord Howick and General Fitzpatrick. Pitt did not court place. Lord Melville never wanted place. Nor the Addingtons nor the Hawkesburies nor the Hobarts nor the Edens nor the Roses nor the Huskissons nor the Cannings nor the Calcrafts nor Alexander Davison nor General Delancey; no, none of them ever wanted, or now want, place and pelf, any more than these are wanted by the Grenvilles: all, all to a man, have wanted merely the power of serving the country; that country which is so dear to them, and to which they are so dear. But, in such case, men, in the ardour of their zeal to be serviceable, are apt to over-rate their ability; and, I think, if we look at the thirteen months administration of these men, we shall find it difficult to imagine how they could possibly have done less good to the country; the putting a stop to the increase of the taxes being the only act of theirs worthy of marked approbation, and that was a measure, which the state of things would, of itself, have effected. It may, indeed, be said, that, after having, most of them, been kept out of power for twenty years, nay for twenty-two years, it was no more than fair to allow them the first year to settle themselves and their relations well down; and that, when we accuse Mr. Sheridan of having fulfilled none of his pledges, we uncandidly overlook the fact, that he has been settling his son in a place worth three thousand pounds a year, at home, while he is captain of a regiment serving abroad; is this doing nothing? Is it nothing for Mr. Grey to have made his father an Earl and himself a Lord? Did he do nothing while he was at the head of the Admiralty? Those who accuse him of that forget, surely, that he turned off Sir Charles Saxton, the Commissioner at Portsmouth, upon a pension, for life, of six hundred pounds a year, in order to make way for his brother, the "Honourable" Mr. Grey; and that another brother of his, who has acquired his military fame I know not where, has been appointed to

supercede General Baird in the command of the Cape of Good Hope. Is this doing nothing? And this is only a very small part of what he has done for his own kindred, to say nothing of what he has done for those who have shewn themselves willing to defend him against the reproaches of his former friends. Then there is my Lord Henry Petty, has he done nothing? Let any one look at the brood of young friends that he was nursing up, and some of whom he had actually got, not only into office but into parliament, though, to ignorant observers, it would not seem that nature ever intended them for any thing beyond the desk of a counting-house. This is, I think, doing much; and, only a little of his lordship's works, in this way, have become visible, the chief part of his brood having not yet made their appearance, being, at this moment, in much about the same situation as that of a nest of callow rats at the tearing down of the building, amongst the rotten and hollow parts of which they are deposited. Has Mr. Calcraft done nothing? Has General Fitzpatrick done nothing in not only attending to his office, but in securing to himself, independent of that office, a colonelship of an old regiment, though he sold his company in the Guards twenty years ago, and though he has not seen a day's service since? Has Lord Erskine done nothing? Is the taking of his son from the bar (where, doubtless, he would soon have got briefs and fees), and the making an *ambassador* of him; is this nothing? Is it nothing to have bestowed a large church living upon a son of Mrs. Bouverie? Is it nothing to have made comfortable provision for every relation that was dependent upon himself? And, are all these things; are they, and a hundred others that might be mentioned, nothing? Are they nothing at all? And, coming to reason and conscience, Gentlemen, could we expect, that, amidst all these important concerns, the old musty pledges about parliamentary reform and the sedition bills should be remembered? To be sure, it may be said, that any body else; that any fifty men that one could have stopped in the Haymarket, would have been as able, though, perhaps, not quite so willing, to do all this, as the Whig ministers have been; and, as this is probably true, I really can see no reason to regret, upon the score of ability, their departure from office, especially when I consider, that they will be succeeded by men equally adroit in the creating and disposing of places and pensions.——The second grand reason alledged for their offering to withdraw the bill, is, that they wished to deprive the *tartuffe* courtiers, as they call them, of an opportunity of asserting, that they were turned out for attempting to force the king to do that which was contrary to the dictates of his conscience. Now, Gentlemen, you will observe, that, either they did attempt to force the king's conscience, or they did not. If they did not; if they proposed to him nothing but what was constitutional and expedient; what a pretty proof of their *firmness* have we, in their having given up the measure, lest their adversaries should make of their perseverance a handle wherewith to excite popular prejudice against them? And, if they did attempt to force the king's conscience, what shall we say to the sincerity that taught them to endeavour to make the world believe, that they did not? Their choice, therefore, seems to lie between unparralleled pusilanimity and unparralleled hypocrisy, the very least of their meannesses being, that, at any rate, and upon any condition, they wished to keep their places. "No," they will say, "we "refused to keep them upon the last condi- "tion proposed to us." Aye, aye; so you did; but, you well knew, that, if the king had once had you down in black and white, your places would not have been worth an hour's purchase; and that, in fact, you would have been turned out, and, if possible, in a plight a little worse than that which you now are.———As long as there was any, even the faintest hope, of preserving those places, you stuck to them like a louse to a German's beard, which retreats and advances with the ebbing and flowing of the beer mug or the gin glass; but, when you were *certain* that you could keep them no longer, then, and not until then, you made a refusal that might serve, as you hoped, to reinstate you in the opinion of your former friends; a hope in which you will, assuredly, find yourselves deceived. Your promised *explanation* cannot have reached me, before this sheet is in the press; but, after what I have seen in your associate, Mr. Perry's news-paper, I want not to hear it, in order to enable me to judge of its substance. It will consist in dark hints, in general, loose, and common-place observations, upon the prerogatives of the crown, upon the duty and *responsibility* of ministers, upon the critical situation of affairs, and upon your own endeavours and virtues; but, mark my words, your harangues will be received, out of doors, at least, with as much indifference as you received the petition of Colonel Johnstone. The news-papers containing them may be *read*, and may be *suffered to lie upon the table*; but, not one

sigh of sorrow will they draw forth, not one word will they cause to be articulated in your favour.

III. Upon the conduct of the King, in this case, there is no need of saying much. He acted as most other men do, in similar circumstances; he followed his own inclination. It is not necessary to enter upon the question, whether he did right, or wrong; and, besides, the constitution says, that he can do no wrong. All that it seems to be worth our while to think about, as touching the conduct of the King, is this: that, the news-paper writers assert, that it was he, or persons acting under his commands, that stopped the progress of the bill in the House of Commons. I have before observed, that we have been taught to believe, that there are certain *checks* and *balances* in our constitution of government; but, Gentlemen, if these news-writers speak truth; if the King can, when he pleases, put a stop to the progress of a bill in the House of Commons; if this be the case, it is, in reality, the King who causes every law to pass that does pass; and, as he is also the executor of the law, where, in that case, are those famous *checks* and balances? And, of what use at all is the House of Commons? You will, of course, perceive, that I am arguing against the doctrine of the news-paper writers, without pretending to admit the fact; but, Gentlemen, I scruple not to assert, and that in the most unqualified manner, that, if the King had it in his power, to stop, whether directly or indirectly, the progress of a bill in parliament, that parliament, like the old degenerated, corrupted, and despised parliament of Paris, would be a mere court wherein to register the edicts of the King, and that we, however we might endeavour to disguise the shameful truth, should be the subjects of an arbitrary monarch.——So far, however, am I from regarding this as our present situation; so far am I from looking upon the parliament as a set of puppets, moved backward and forward by a set of ministerial wires; so far am I from supposing that 658 of our countrymen could be found to be so detestably base, that I must regard the postponement of the Roman Catholic bill as merely temporary. It was brought in by Lord Howick; but, having been read by the House of Commons, having been received by that House with every mark of approbation, some other member will, surely, move for the second reading, in due time. I confidently trust, that I shall not be disappointed in this, because it seems necessary in order to give a proof of the absurdity of the above-mentioned doctrine of the news-paper writers, Good God! the King cause a bill to be stopped in its progress through the House of Commons! I dare be sworn that such an idea never entered the mind of his Majesty even in a dream. If this were the case, what a farce would be the *deliberations* of that house! We might do with their votes what that excellent fellow, Swift, proposed to do with those of the Legion Club. Forbid it decency! Forbid it the title of "honourable gentleman!" Why, if this abominable doctrine were to be admitted, the deliberations of the House of Commons would resemble the proceedings of a Dean and Chapter, acting, in the choice of a bishop, under the illuminating inspiration of a *congé d'élire*; that is to say, *a leave to elect a bishop*, accompanied with *the name of the person to be elected.*" Mr. Baron Maseres, in an excellent pamphlet upon church affairs, recommends that this mode of proceeding be discontinued; because, says he, it is ridiculous to hold an election, when the parties electing are commanded whom to elect, and it is particularly offensive, to a mind really religious, to see the aid of the Holy Ghost invoked upon such occasions. It were much better, he adds, for the king to appoint the bishops at once by letters patent. And, Gentlemen, if the doctrine of the news-paper writers were sound, would it not be much better for the king to make the laws himself and to issue them to his subjects, as the Emperors of Russia and Austria do? If the king and his ministers, no matter which, could stop the progress of a bill, in the House of Commons, when they pleased, they could of course, cause to pass whatever laws they pleased; and, if they could do this, no matter by what means, whether by the bayonet or by securing a corrupt majority of the members, should we not be the most base of wretches to affect to believe ourselves to be the subjects of an arbitrary monarch? Far, however, from us Gentlemen, be such thoughts as these. We know that this news-paper doctrine is base and wicked. We know, that the "faithful "Commons" are the guardians of our purses and our liberties. We know that they are all, yea all, "honourable gentlemen." We know how full of independence and of spirit they are; and, therefore, I call upon you to join me in execrating this abominable doctrine of the news-paper writers, who, when I consider what passed with respect to Mr. Reeves, must, I should think, certainly have their ears clipped off. Mr. Reeves had said, in a pamphlet, that the

constitution was a tree, of which the king was the trunk, and the two houses of parliament the branches, or, rather the limbs. "These two," said he, "may be hewn down "and cast into the fire; but the trunk still "flourishes." This metaphor caused a prodigious uproar. The Whigs, with Mr. Sheridan at their head, brought the matter before parliament, and moved and voted for the pamphlet to be burnt by the hands of the Common Hangman, and to address the king never to suffer Mr. Reeves to enjoy any place of profit of trust, as long as he should live. This motion failed, but the House ordered the Attorney General to prosecute Mr. Reeves in the court of King's Bench, and in the motion for this order they were nearly unanimous. Well, then, will the Whigs now be silent, when it is openly, and, doubtless "*falsely* and *scandalously*" asserted, that the king has caused a bill to be stopped in its progress through the House of Commons, and, what is more, that these very Whigs, have been the bearers of his commands? Oh, foul and wicked slander; equal, at the very least, to that contained in Mr. Paull's last petition! And, shall this pass unnoticed? I trust not. I trust, that some one of those "youths of elevated rank "and of lofty and generous sentiments," whom Mr. Wilberforce so applauded, during the debate upon the slave-trade abolition bill; I do trust, that some one of them will step forward, upon this occasion, to avenge us, who have been so grossly insulted in the persons and office of our independent and faithful and incorruptible representatives, called the House of Commons.

IV. As to the cause of boldness in the adversaries of the ministers, it is simply this; that they well knew, that there was not one sensible and sound man in the kingdom, or upon the face of the whole earth, that would make an effort to prevent their being turned out, or that would express, or feel, the smallest regret at the event; and, as to the great body of the people, exclusive of the government dependents, it was easy to foresee, that, though they might expect no good from their successors, they would feel satisfaction at the fall of those, who, after twenty years of pledges, had disappointed and betrayed them. In the passage which I have taken as a motto to this sheet, Gentlemen, I expressed the hopes and the fears, which alternately pervaded my mind, at the time when these ministers came into power. In twenty other passages, written about the same time, I exhorted the ministers so to act as to merit the confidence of the people; and, in one of those passages, in particular, I predicted, that, unless they so acted, their power would be of short duration, and their fall unregretted. My exhortations passed by unheeded. Instead of a *great change* as to the system of Pitt, the new ministers began their career by voting away our money to pay the debts of Pitt, whose character and whose system have been, from that day to this, subjects of their incessant and even gratuitous applause, while, in their measures, in their doubling of the income-tax; in their screwing up of the collections of the assessed and other taxes; in their stifling of inquiry, by their previous questions; in their backwardness to grant papers of information; in their constant and but too successful efforts to screen persons, accused of misrule or peculation; in their unrelenting oppression of all those who became accusers of such persons; in their dissolving of parliament and their interference in elections; in their introduction of foreign troops; in their creating of new offices and granting of new pensions; in all these, and in almost every thing else, they have followed the example of Pitt, and have, with all their might, both in words and in deeds, supported his destructive system. And, as if all this were not enough, the persons formerly attached to them, and to whom they principally owed their elevation, not being made of stuff sufficiently supple for their purposes, they uniformly turned their backs upon, while they embraced with political philanthrophy, the ready-made sycophants of Pitt. Of the numbers upon whom they turned their backs, *I am not one*, I having, on the *eve* of their elevation, explictly declared to them, that *I never would have any public emolument as long as I lived*; but, I know many, upon whom they have turned their backs; and, amongst all their sins, this, their sin of ingratitude, is by far the greatest. Let them now wail the lost love of the people; that people, whom, in the hey-day of their power, they despised and held in derision. Do they expect, Gentlemen, that *you*, for instance, to whom they formerly addressed themselves for support, and against whose free voice they have recently combined with the Pitts in such malignant hostility, representing as Jacobins and Levellers all of you who adhered faithfully to the principles formerly professed by themselves; do they, indeed, expect, that, amongst you, there will be found one single man foolish enough to regret their fall? Whatever they may expect, however an overweening vanity may lead them to conclude, that their powers of delusion and deception will again

serve their turn, their adversaries will draw no such conclusion. Those adversaries well know, that while they have lost all their former friends, they have gained over not one of their former enemies, who, while they were cherished by them, were watching for the opportunity of insuring their destruction. Those adversaries well know, that their professions will never again be believed; and that, when, from the opposition benches, where they are already seated, they again clamour about corruption, and about the increasing power of the crown, we shall remind them (as with life and health, we will) of their own corruption, and of their having added so enormously to the pensions of the Royal Family, while, at the very same time, they passed an act to exempt from the income tax the King's property in the funds. All this their adversaries well know, and knowing it, they also know, that they have nothing to fear from their clamours, which will all be ascribed, as is most justly due, not to the love of their country, but solely to the love of power and emolument.

Upon the remaining topics, I shall trouble you with some observations in a future letter. In the meanwhile,

I remain,
Gentlemen,
Your faithful friend,
And obedient servant,
WM. COBBETT.

Botley, 26th March, 1807.

P. S. I find, that in representing *Sir Philip Francis* as having been appointed Governor of Buenos Ayres, and *Mr. Windham* as having belonged to the Jacobin Club at Paris, I was deceived by the newspapers. The former, I find has no place; and the latter (whom I always except when I speak in terms of disapprobation of the ministers, and with whose name, I am confident, I shall never be under the necessity of connecting any mean act or motive) was I am assured, never a member of the Jacobin Club.——I shall, next week, if possible, publish the whole of Mr. Le Maitre's Vindication; and that, I think, will amply compensate for any little omission, when he was named upon a former occasion.——In the present sheet will be found a letter from Mr. O'Bryen upon the *Rochester Election* and upon *Whig Gratitude*, upon which subject Mr. O'Bryen could write a very interesting and instructive chapter.

ROCHESTER ELECTION.

From the Morning Post.

MR. EDITOR.—As, during the Rochester Election, the cause of Sir Sydney Smith had your generous support, and I, his representative upon that occasion, experienced your kindness, I trust you will afford to me the opportunity of saying, through your journal, a few final words upon the final result of that struggle.—Immediately after the election, your readers may recollect that some articles appeared in your paper, which proved upon Mr. Calcraft, as far as fact and fair reasoning can prove, the loss of Sir Sydney Smith's Election. The names were then published of the voters in the Ordnance Department. Even at that time, when Mr. Barnett's majority stood at eleven, the cause of Sir Sydney's failure was made matter of demonstration. At this moment, the majority of Mr. Barnett is reduced to six. A scrutiny of the votes did not constitute a principal object of the petition. Only about one hour and a half of the whole time the Committee sat was occupied in scrutiny. Had witnesses, who had been duly summoned, and whose names were repeatedly and vainly called over on Thursday last, attended in time, the numbers of Sir Sydney and Mr. Barnett had been nearly equalled. These facts are stated only for the purpose of pointing the public attention to the honour and probity of those persons who first proclaimed that six votes could not be gotten for Sir Sydney—and who, afterwards, upon the damning contradiction exhibited by the poll, changed their honest cant, and attributed the miscarriage of his cause to mismanagement. He, for whom six votes could not be procured, has, at this moment, only six votes against him, in an election where between seven and eight hundred persons polled!—In the very outset of the committee, the genius of Mr. Calcraft revealed itself. It is the custom of committees not to admit witnesses into the court till they are called. An order to attend as a witness had been served upon me, Sir, who now address you. The drift of this stratagem was quite obvious. As it was made a fundamental point, during the election, that I should be interrupted whenever I addressed the Hall, at Rochester, so it became a primary ground in London to exclude me from the committee. There is an involuntary flattery in all this, which my opponents have not art enough to conceal. The committee first sat on Friday the 20th of February; and the first thing that occurred, even before the chairman had taken his seat was, Mr. Calcraft's saying "Mr. O'Bryen is summoned as a witness, and cannot be in the room." Serjeant Lens, the eminently able leader for the petition, appealed to the committee, and said the cause could not go on, if the counsel

were deprived of my assistance. At length this manœuvre was baffled by my name being taken down as an 'agent'—and the circumstance is here stated, only to shew, that Mr. Calcraft has preserved his consistency, throughout the business, even to dramatic exactness.—The committee closed its labours yesterday; and the result is, that Mr. Barnett retains his seat—that the petition was not frivolous or vexatious.—A detail of the transactions in the committee would be as impossible in a newspaper, as it is evidently useless.—Sir, if the conduct of a committee of the House of Commons, or of the House of Commons itself, were not liable to the fair revision of their fellow citizens, this would not be England; but some servile, ill starred region, in which the principles of free thinking, of virtue, and of legal liberty, were utterly extinct. If it were my opinion that this committee had not discharged its high function suitably to its designation, I apprehend that I should find it far from a difficult task, decorously and within the law, to discuss its errors; but from all embarrassment on that score, the upright determinations of the committee relieve me altogether. That committee has approved itself, what all committees sitting under the Grenville Act, will, I trust, ever be found, a court of conscience and of honour, in the truest sense of the words. There are, however, who think that the treating was brought sufficiently within the statute to vacate the election; yet it cannot be denied, even by me, an interested party, that the evidence upon this point, is, upon the whole, somewhat short of every other case of actual vacation that has reached my knowledge. The truth is, there are dangers both ways. If the members of so uncertain a body as an election committee are identified with a candidate, no candidate can be safe. *E contra*, if an election committee, keeping clear of the ostensibility of a candidate, can order seven hundred pounds worth of treating, in one house, in a few days, is it not to be feared, that the doors are thrown open again to that system of cruel expense, and consequent brutalization which, if put an end to, would be of itself a reform of parliament, in favour of which all discords would harmonize.—— These are points replete with doubt, and on which few will decide without a pause, except, indeed, it may be, some such gifted mortal as Mr. Barnett's nominee - a luminary compared with whom Judge Minos was a Jefferies.—As to the seat, it was the wish of Sir Sidney Smith's representative, who has no taste for an useless revenge—failing to seat his principal under the petition, rather to leave Mr. Barnett in possession, than encounter the toils of a fresh contest. Other friends decided otherwise, and upon grounds both reasonable and natural. The conduct of their opponents at Rochester towards Sir Sidney's friends was not of a character to neutralise or reconcile them. A silence, total and entire, on our part, from the first day of the election to the last, was met by a course of libelling quite unparalleled. Even, to this hour, four months after the contest, this honourable warfare is kept up with an indefatigableness which is quite surprising. I have had somewhat more than one man's share of these good things levelled at me, but I am patient and silent.

'Full four months slander'd, did I once reply?

There is about us cockneys, a sort of metropolitan apathy upon such points, which provincial sensibility cannot be brought to. That mere slander never does a permanent mischief is, with me, a fixed opinion. I have in the course of my life observed, that the greatest, the brightest, and the best of our cotemporaries, have been the most assailed in this way, yet have I seen them closing their long glories with a deeper hold sn the hearts of their friends, and in the regards of good men, than those whom public calumny has never once disturbed out of their tranquil obscurity, whilst the host of their revilers is utterly forgotten. 'If you will give me eighteen-pence,' said Swift to Pope, 'I will ensure you, that posterity shall never know you had an enemy, unless you preserve his remembrance by naming him.' It is not in the vices alone of the great that the little should follow their example.—This Rochester contest has, indeed, been to me the source of various vexation. It has raised up against me, new, numerous, and powerful enemies, without the smallest possibility of balancing the evil by any kind of benefit. Frail indeed ts the security against the malice of bad men, that we have not deserved it. Slight is the force of mere reason when opposed by bare faced power. The hostilities are incredible which I am encountering, only for the guilt of being in earnest in a friendship of twenty-five years duration. And is the attempting a kindness, merely for its own sake, such an offence against society as demands an apology? Surely this, if it be an innovation, may be pardoned—in the assured certainty, that the practice will not be contagious. Oh, grave! thou hast indeed a victory! If he, whose service was perfect freedom, and to whose free service (I am fit for none else) I have dedicated my life—if he, in whose very defects there were more

virtues than in the perfections of half the kings and ministers upon earth, were now in life and light, I think he would not see a man put upon his defence only for not being insincere; nor would the question he mooted whether or not it is a crime, to aim at an honest service for an absent friend. In what I am now saying, there is more, much more than meets the reader's ear; but less, far less than is sadly passing in the writer's mind. A little, and but a little, justice is all that I ask of either foes or friends.—— D. O'BRYEN, *Craven-street, Feb.* 23, 1807.

" LEARNED LANGUAGES."

No. 14.

SIR,—No two propositions can be more distinct than *yours* upon this subject, in the sense in which it presented itself to my mind upon its first appearance, and in that which your explanation has since given to it; so much so, that if I have now discovered your meaning, though I still differ from you, I shall release you and your readers from any further attention to me; for the difference between us will not remain so considerable as to induce me to take any part in the ensuing contest. You are wrong, Sir, in imputing to me any contempt for you as an antagonist: in this sort of warfare, I consider you as more than a "giant refreshed;" as a "giant" who does not want refreshing. I am but a pigmy; but there are some occasions, upon which no sense of inequality ought to dismay us; and such an one should I have thought the present, if your meaning had been what I supposed it. I should then have gone on to the contest with the same feelings with which David went forth to meet Goliah, relying not upon my own strength, but upon the justice of my cause. I find, however, Sir, that I have totally misunderstood the meaning of the words "general education," as they occur in your proposition; and I think the blame is with yourself. How could I suppose, from the occasion that introduced your remarks upon this subject, that you meant by "general education," the education of the generality of mankind; the meaning which your explanation has now affixed to those words?—You go into the Senate; you are present at the discussion of a question, that can be fairly considered only by a reference to those maxims of sound policy and general justice, that have been collected and enforced in the ablest manner by writers in one of the dead languages: you return in a fit of indignation at the frequent repetition by the different speakers of the terms which those writers use; and then you come to the profound conclusion, "that the Dead Languages are improperly called learned; "and, as a part of general education, are "worse than useless." Now, Sir, of whose education could I suppose you were complaining, if not of that of the speakers whom you had just heard? I therefore supposed that you meant to condemn the adoption of "those languages, as a part of that general "education" which ought to be given to a senator, contra-distinguished to that particular education which might be considered as necessary for a professional man.—With your proposition, taken in this sense, I felt ready to combat, as with one of the most absurd that has ever been maintained by the boldest adventurer in reasoning; but if, Sir, I have mistaken your meaning, however I may differ from you, I beg to withdraw from the contest; observing only, that the proposition, as I now understand it, hardly applies to the course of academical education in this country; for, I believe, it will be found upon inquiry, that there are few, if any, students entered at either of our universities, who are not intended for one of the learned professions; or else are, by family or fortune, entitled to indulge the ambition of becoming either hereditary or elective members of the British Senate—I am, Sir,—A LATE MEMBER OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.——*Temple, Jan.* 28*th.*

" LEARNED LANGUAGES."

No. 15.

SIR,——I presume that the battle array which has been drawn out against you, in defence of the "Learned Languages," has awakened you to a due sense of your temerity, and that you have now shrunk appalled from the contest in which you so imprudently engaged yourself. To spare a fallen enemy may be a very good maxim in ordinary warfare, but we never admit it in our literary contentions, much less can we think of mercy in the present case, when our whole body has been vilified, when you have laid us open so inhumanly, when you have stung us all to the quick, as you will doubtless have perceived by the sympathetic agony which you have excited in many of my brethren who have addressed their angry observations to you. Therefore, Sir, you must pardon me if I inflict upon you a few more arguments in order to rivet you to the ground upon which you are now prostrate.——You would have us suppose, that the true signification of the word "knowledge," with reference to the earthly state of us mortals, is, a thorough acquaintance with those things which have a peculiar relation to our respective pursuits in life, and which enable us to fulfil, with ability, the duties of whatever

station we may be placed in. Thus you would call an able general, an able admiral, an able mechanic, "men of knowledge;" meaning, I suppose, that their excellence in their respective vocations, entitles them to this distinction. But, Sir, you would grossly misapply (and by misapplying degrade) an appellation reserved exclusively for eminent critical scholars: the first may have learnt by heart the translations of Homer, Thucydides, Cæsar, &c. he may have profoundly studied the modern science of war in all its branches, yet, if he be incapable of reading these old authors in their original text, he is, after all, but an arrant dunce; and so of your admiral and mechanic. The assertion that there are peculiar studies adapted to particular professions is mere nonsense, Sir: Greek and Latin are the only solid bases upon which a man can hope to raise a superstructure honourable to himself in whatever line of life he may embark. All my brother Perriwigs, not excepting my brother of Queen's College, agree with me in this position; but as your stubborn neck may refuse to bow to such high authority, I shall, perhaps, in a future letter, give you my proofs. I shall shew you that the divine, however exemplarily he may discharge his pastoral duties in visiting the sick, administering comfort to the afflicted, whether in mind or body, relieving the necessitous, and observing in all things the precepts of the Gospel, is an unworthy member of his profession, and ought never to indulge a hope of advancement in the church, if he be not a good classical scholar, and cannot fluently read his testament in Greek; the which, therefore, is of far more importance than the practice of its tenets. I shall convince you, that a statesman can never be a proper guardian of the political and commercial interests of his country, unless he has studied the works of Plato and Aristotle in the original. I shall give you the most unanswerable reasons for the impossibility of the lawyer's becoming grounded in a knowledge of English jurisprudence, and of his acquiring that refined taste which alone can enable him to relish the delicate beauties and elegancies of his law Latinity, without being thoroughly versed in the old Roman language. I will prove to you, that our shopkeepers' sons derive infinite benefit from our present school system, by being thereby enabled to address their future customer, with a Ciceronian *ore rotundo*; nay, even that our farmers and labourers cannot become eminent husbandmen, unless they can repeat Virgil's Georgicks and read Cato and Columella. In a word, I shall run through all the diversified characters of human pursuits, and distinctly shew you how the "Learned Languages" bear upon each of them. Such, indeed, is *my* admiration of them, that I would wish even that my servants had been taught to speak Greek, like a certain Polish nobleman I have heard of, whose love of music was so predominant that he never engaged any person in his employ who was not capable of addressing and answering him in recitativo. I know, Sir, that you and many foxes who like you have either lost their tails or have never had any, (I shall not stick at this difference as my learned brother Anacharsis has done) will affect to treat all this with contempt. You will have the presumption to make light of all acquirements which have not an evident connexion with, which do not, more or less, directly tend to, some precise definite useful object of our duties. You will talk of the expediency of adapting the means to the end, condemning every hour as misapplied, which is applied in attaining what you have the insolence to call the superfluities of literature, and which might have been applied in obtaining the substance of what you would term *real knowledge*. You will call it something like folly to suppose that one general uniform system of education in the learned languages *can* be *properly* adapted to the instruction of youth, who are hereafter to be called to a variety of professions totally dissimilar as to the qualifications which are requisite for the exercise of them; throwing it in our teeth that even the ignorant vulgar do not apprentice their children (that is, put them to school) to a blacksmith to learn the art and mystery of a weaver, and exulting in this happy (*I* call it impertinent) illustration of your hypothesis. You will tell us that the attainment of ideas, not of words, is the sole legitimate object of study and education. You will endeavour to persuade us that you really and in good earnest are of opinion, that accurate translations of ancient authors are sufficient for every useful purpose; at least with those who cannot make a better; and that *that undefinable something*, beyond their mere ideas, which we discover in the originals, exists only in poetical composition, if it exist at all. You will say, perhaps, that a man may write good English, express his thoughts correctly, and even forcibly and elegantly, without understanding one word of Greek or Latin. And you may even have the effrontery to adduce yourself as an example. But, Sir, beware! the hour of complete vengeance is at hand. Dr. Parr and Mr. Porson are ready to hurl their Greek satires at your head. My learned brethren are preparing to overwhelm and absolutely to stifle you under a heap of cita-

tions from ancient and modern authorities; from the pressure of which no arguments drawn from abstract theory or practical observation can relieve you. The spirits of departed pedagogues will rise up against you; every living pedagogue will have his birch uplifted to chastise such an insolent innovator, whilst I and my fellow collegians will expose to the world the folly of your supposition, that a man may discharge all the moral and social obligations of his station in life with ability and reputation, without possessing any knowledge of the " Learned Languages ;" and even that he may have a chance of discharging them with much more utility to the public, and credit to himself, if the time which is usually devoted to these languages, were employed in the pursuit of that knowledge which is immediately applicable to the profession which he may have chosen for himself.—And now, Sir, having done for the present with the argumentative part of my observations, permit me to address a word or two to your conscience, if a man who does not understand Greek and Latin can have a conscience. Have you well considered the consequences which your revolutionary doctrines are calculated to produce? Were your system to be adopted and acted upon, all our youth would be deprived of the pleasureable occupation of applying unremittingly to the Learned Languages during 9 or 10 years of their lives, and would be sent, perhaps, to some vulgar institutions, where nothing would be taught them but such things as base minds call " useful for the purposes of active life"—such things as you may be foolish enough to think better adapted than these dead languages to excite and gratify the curiosity of young people, and to enlarge their minds without creating that tœdium which the study of mere language is supposed to create even in grown persons. A total breaking up of *our* venerable ancient monastic establishment must sooner or later ensue, or, at least it would fall into disrepute and neglect, if you should succeed in persuading the world that a head is not well filled merely because it is filled with Greek and Latin. Then, Sir, do you not feel some emotions of compassion and pity, when you reflect upon the number of terrific perriwigs (whose sizes are always commensurate with the erudition of which they are the emblems) which, as well as the exalted heads which they cover, the triumph of your principles would humble to the dust? Consider, Sir, I beseech you, the woeful plight in which you would see the possessors of these heads and perriwigs, when, by neutralizing the merits of their present contents, they would be reduced to the extremity of advertising them " to be lett unfurnished," consider what havock you would make among us all, should the world, imbibing your extravagant notions of the nullity of what we call, and what has hitherto been regarded as *learning*, place all our acquirements on the lowest point of the scale of human attainments. Reflect upon these and the many other evils which would flow from the accomplishment of your abominable projects, and if you have a heart susceptible of feeling, you will suffer the double torture of a disgraceful defeat, and of the compunctions of your own conscience; in which state I shall leave you for the present.——I must, however, before I conclude, make an apology for my learned brother Anacharsis, who has unwittingly introduced the name of Locke in support of our thesis.—This Locke, Sir, was an ignorant fellow, who wrote what he chose to call a Treatise on Education, in which he has not treated the Learned Languages with that profound respect which they deserve, and which my learned brother has apparently never read.——I am, Sir, yours,——A PERRIWIG OF MAUDLIN.—— *Oxford, Feb.* 25, 1807.

" LEARNED LANGUAGES."

No. 16.

SIR,——In my last letter to you (No. 9.) I expressed my opinions upon the subject of the " Learned Languages," and then waited quietly till your promised vindication of their inutility should appear; but, as I find you have extended the hour till May-day, I am induced to send you a second letter I have taken the trouble to read all the arguments on either side, asserted in your Register by different correspondents; and sometimes I have thought that your liberality has triumphed over your judgment, by inserting such futile productions as school-boys only could pen, and school-boys only ought to read. Among these, I must class the communications of one who signs himself P. F., whom to answer seriously would, in my opinion, confer more dignity upon folly, than folly ever can deserve. There is nothing more surprising in the human mind, than that obscurity of perception which darkens the clearest propositions, and throws a tenfold night about them. But, in the present case, the problem is easily solved; the mere love of opposition, the pleasure of controverting what another maintains, and perhaps too, in weak minds, the pleasure of seeing their own lucubrations in print, with a neat type, and upon a nice yellow paper, are motives strong enough; and, indeed, I feel that such motives only could operate to the production of such *anilities* as those I allude to. I can easily foresee, that some ingenious gentleman may have wit enough to retort

this upon myself: but, after this anticipation, he would only have the humble merit of acting from my suggestion.—Those who have argued on the opposite side of the question, and maintain the *utility* of the Learned Languages, have not one of them, formed a right conception of the case. They confound perpetually the *languages* with the *things* contained in those languages. They talk of the beautiful morality of Xenophon, of the profundity of Tacitus, the elegant precision of Sallust, *usque ad nauseam;* they never consider that this morality, that this profundity exist as effectually in our versions of them, as in the originals. Will any man venture to tell me that after reading the Cyropœdia of Xenophon in Lord Lansdown's translation, I have not as clear an idea of the virtues that constitute an amiable prince and a wise legislator, as he who learnedly mouths it in the Greek? Or, will it be asserted, that I shall not feel the same detestation of the vices of Cambyses, as related in Herodotus, because I read the account of them in English? What a mummery is this! The correspondent mentioned above, talks idly about the revival of learning, and thinks he has established a wonderful fact when he discovers that to that revival we owe our present advancement in science. This is something like a man who should tell you it is dark at night, and light in the day time. The discovery of ancient manuscripts certainly engendered an ardour for learning, and an emulation which at a remote period produced the most important events: but the bastard learning of the middle ages is more easily praised than read. But even so late as the close of the fifteenth century, the Medicean family in their laudable efforts for the preservation of classical remains, only built as it were a cradle in which future literary heroes were to be nursed. Three of the greatest names of modern Italy were a century anterior to this, Dante, Boccacio and Petrarca; and at that time there were few manuscripts yet discovered, and those few difficult of attainment. (See Vie de Petrarque par de Sade.) Sallust, Livy, some of the works of Cicero and a few of the poets: what assistance then, did those men derive from the Latin classics? and Greek was altogether out of the question, for it was not till the subversion of the Eastern empire in 1452 that the fugitive Greeks brought their language and literature to Italy. It appears, therefore, that to the exertions of native genius the knowledge of ancient languages is by no means an indispensible appanage. Shakespeare knew them not, and who regrets that he did not? Burns knew them not, and where is he that thinks for a moment, his genius would have exerted itself more vigorously if he had? But this is somewhat irrelevant to that part of the question which I am more immediately anxious to controvert.—Knowledge may be considered under two different points of view; its acquisition and its application; these two are quite distinct, for there are some who store up mines of intellectual wealth, and have not the talent to bring it into circulation. Knowledge is nothing but an aggregation of *ideas* derived from experience, from books, or from reflection: we are acquiring the first from the day of our birth to the day of our death: the second only a favoured few acquire; and the third a still more favoured few. I shall confine myself to the second. The consciousness which we have of any thing is an idea, and the question is not, *how* this consciousness is acquired, but whether it be actually acquired. If I know that Cyrus defeated Crœsus at the battle of Thymbria; if I know that Egyptian Thebes had a hundred gates and could send forth 10,000 armed men at each; if I know that Semiramis crossed the Indus, or that Sardanapalus was a weak and effeminate king, and the last of the Assyrian monarchy; that the grandeur of Ninevah perished with his falling fortunes; if I know all this, what does it matter whether I have learnt it in Greek or English? The Grecian or the Latinist may tell me, you have lost the beauties of the original, you have lost all that indefinable grace which cannot be transfused into a foreign language, the harmony of periods, the charms of antithesis have totally escaped you; though he should tell me this, and probably what he tells me would be true, yet I would reply that *my knowledge,* my useful, my substantial knowledge, was not one whit inferior to his: I am prepared to draw all the results which my reason can draw, and that is the knowledge of reflection. I will illustrate this from example. A linguist reads in Tacitus *obtrectatio et livor pronis auribus accipiuntur:* an unlettered man reads *envy and detraction are willingly received:* the former, reads in Seneca, *curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent;* the latter, *light sorrows are clamorous, severe ones are dumb; &c. &c.* and I would ask whether the moral truth of the one or the other be not as perfectly possessed, relished, and understood by both? What is there so all commanding in these languages, that our native idiom is to be degraded as fit only for transacting our daily duties? The miserable affectation of scholars has produced this blind resignation of our sober faculties; scholars, who themselves destitute of native powers seek to enhance the reputation of what they have acquired, and magnify their own pursuits; like the tanner, the stone

mason, and the carpenter in the fable, who were for having respectively the walls of their town made of leather stone, and wood.—But there is another advantage which these advocates in support of the Learned Languages maintain; viz. that the knowledge of our own is wonderfully improved by them. This, in futility, far transcends the other. These entrench themselves behind the wretched affectation of learning, and shew, with the absurd parade of a scholar, the use they have made of their own utensils. Greek! Greek! Latin! Latin! that's their acropolis; that's their bulwark; that's their defence; and that they imagine is to be a gag of silence upon unlettered reasoners, to strike them with awe, to strike them with humility and submission. They complain, that they found a difficulty in understanding words derived from the Greek and Latin; that they confounded their significations; that they never had clear ideas of them. All this may be so; and if it *be* so, I am not bound to shew the reason *why* it is so, though there needs "no ghost come from the grave to tell us." But I will maintain, that a man of common sense may have as accurate an idea of a vocable derived from the Learned Languages, *as it is used in our own*, as he who knows its radix. I say, as it is USED IN OUR OWN; for the stability of a language is or ought to be such, as to preclude innovation; and although I may know that a certain word bears a multiplicity of significations in its original, yet *I* am bound to use it, not according to those primitive significations, but according to its received and legitimate ones in my native tongue; and a man who knows *no* language but his own, may yet *acquire* his own, in the fullest and completest sense of the word, by the study of the best writers and the use of the best dictionaries. I have also heard it urged, that students in anatomy have had a clearer idea of the several parts of the human body, after they had learned Greek than before. But *I know*, that the first surgeon now in England, and who resides not far from St. James's, has no more Greek than an Ethiopian; and another medical gentleman, a friend of mine, who has risen to the top of his profession, knows no language but his own: and yet I'll answer for it, he would amputate a limb, or perform an operation, with as much skill and success as a Greek surgeon; nay, he has often *succeeded* in delicate cases, which the first professional men have declined as hopeless. But in good truth, such jargon can only be tolerable in the mouth of a mere scholar, who possesses not one tittle of native genius, and who erects his self-sufficiency simply and solely upon the plodding diligence with which he has turned over dictionaries and grammars. The knowledge of languages is certainly an ornament to the edifice of *genius*; but when they exist solitary in a barren mind, which produces not one indigenous plant, which merely bears, and that not in a very flourishing manner, whatever is transplanted into it, I then look upon them as a very humble sort of merit indeed. They can aspire no higher than to the poor applause of successful diligence; a diligence in which *every* man can become their competitor, and *many* bear away with the laurel. It requires just the same temper of feeling by which the woodman fells a tree, or the hedger excavates a ditch; they know that their strokes constantly repeated will at length produce the desired effect. The linguist also knows that a heavy and inflexible perseverance must ultimately bring him to an end, and imprint upon his mind the vocables of the language he is studying. But when we compare this humble merit with the higher occupations of the mind, when we compare it with the flights of fancy, the daring combinations of genius, the sublime pictures of imagination, when we compare it with the successful investigation of moral truth, the discoveries of science by which life is rendered happier and our ideas of the Creator expanded; when we compare it with almost any of the native energies of intellect, how poor, how despicably mean it sinks! Give them their due praise; assign them their just rank; and in their own minds let them estimate them as highly as they please: but let them not sink into the common and disgusting error of making the learned languages every thing, and every thing else nothing; let them not place Greek and Latin as the boundary between all that is great and wonderful and lovely, and what is poor, unworthy and disgraceful: let them estimate truly what they have, and they will then find that *words* do not always give *knowledge;* let them not come forth with a magisterial air and a vain parade of learning, to frighten plain, well-meaning men out of their mother tongue, which, God help them! they may have been learning thirty or forty years by telling them "you don't know "Greek; you don't know Latin; *ergo*, you "know nothing, not even English. Sir, it "is impossible that you can understand the "meaning of *synecdoche, sycopa, metaphrase, misogamist, misogymy*, for you "don't know Greek!"—I smile when I think of such language, and pity those who use it.——I remain. Sir, &c.—ATTALUS.—

Liverpool, March 23, 1807.

Printed by Cox and Baylis, No. 75, Great Queen Street, and published by R. Bagshaw, Brydges Street, Covent Garden, where former Numbers may be had: sold also by J. Budd, Crown and Mitre, Pall Mall.